

November 21, 1957

Dr. James A. Shannon, Director
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda 14, Maryland

Dear Doctor Shannon:

As a consultant for panels and study sections within the USPHS I have been frequently concerned about the problem of trying to mobilize the best advice available in those areas of our national life where scientific research impinges on matters that are partly economic, partly medical, and partly sociological or moral. I would like to inquire whether there is any organized effort directed to (1) the general problem of how to cope with such problems and (2) the determination of what problems deserve attention, within the USPHS or outside of it. As a scientist I feel that not enough is being done along these lines but naturally I wish to know whether my impressions are correct before proceeding further. It is my impression that most of the high level decisions are so concerned with day to day problems that little if any time is available for the consideration of legislation that will affect the events in our nation 10,20,40 or 60 years from now. There is little that the individual scientist can do in areas where opinions are necessarily a part of the picture, thus if there are any panels concerned with such problems I would welcome an opportunity to serve on one, since I have been thinking about this problem for some time.

Sincerely yours,

Van R. Potter
Professor of Oncology

VRP:sek

cc. President E. B. Fred
Dean John Z. Bowers
Dr. H. P. Rusch